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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

South of the Himalayas: The View From Peking

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26 February 1973

No. 1629/73

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South of the
Himalayas: the view
from Peking

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
26 February 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

South of the Himalayas: The View From Peking

Summary

At a time when Chinese diplomacy has generally been deft and successful, it has lost ground in South Asia. China's staunchest ally in the region, Pakistan, has been dismembered, leaving India far and away the region's strongest power. Worse, India is allied with the Soviet Union, Peking's greatest enemy. As a result, Peking's policy has been generally hamstrung, except in the smaller nations of the region.

Peking's current South Asian policy may be the result of unforeseen events as much as of calculation. In the period after the Cultural Revolution, its perception of Moscow as a dangerous adversary and its freshly rekindled desire to assume China's "rightful" role in world affairs generated an attempt to forge closer ties not only with old friends in South Asia, particularly Pakistan and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), but also with India. Then, in the spring of 1971, came the Bengali separatist crisis in Pakistan's East Wing. In the beginning, Peking tried both to support Pakistani unity and maintain its detente with India, but when full-scale fighting broke out in December 1971, its diplomatic balancing act not surprisingly collapsed.

The Chinese now find their South Asian policy mortgaged to the Pakistanis and to Bhutto. The Chinese find it necessary to maintain Bhutto in office for fear of ending up with someone worse. At the same time, they would like to strengthen him so that he would feel freer to move toward a settlement with Bangladesh and India. Only then would the Chinese consider the time ripe to renew the move to rapprochement with India.

In Peking's eyes, a Sino-Indian rapprochement would trigger an adjustment in big power interests in the region: i.e., a more self-sufficient India, a more modest role for the Soviet Union, and a larger role for Peking and perhaps for the US as well.

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The Making of a Policy

In the late 1960s, Peking, emerging from four years of intense introspection during the Cultural Revolution, again turned its sights beyond its borders. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and periodic skirmishes along the China-USSR border had persuaded Peking that the USSR was an immediate and dangerous adversary. This judgment provided a focus for Chinese policy in South Asia, where it became a Chinese objective to foster a belt of friendly states, free from significant Soviet influence if not wholly amenable to that of China—an aim congruent with Chinese desire for an important role in world affairs. These considerations pointed Peking toward more conventional ties and contacts with states without much regard to ideological hue.

On the Indian subcontinent, Peking's task was two-fold: to firm up Chinese relations with old friends, especially Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and to forge new and closer bonds with India. Even though Pakistan had remained one of China's few close allies during the Cultural Revolution and Chinese leaders felt deeply about the friendship, by 1970 Peking appears to have decided that success or failure of its policy turned on reconciliation with New Delhi. Although India, lacking nuclear arms, posed no real military threat to Peking—the Indian Army had been chastened by the Chinese in 1962 and the Himalayas were a formidable barrier—China was uneasy over the possibility that India might acquire more powerful weapons, or, worse yet, that the Soviets might secure base rights on Indian territory.

The Chinese decided that the situation called for moderation and flexibility. Hostile propaganda dropped away. Peking refurbished its already formidable credentials in Islamabad by assuring President Yahya Kahn that any detente with India would not be pursued at Pakistan's expense and by granting a new \$200-million loan. China's relations with Sri Lanka improved after Mrs. Bandaranaike was elected prime minister in 1970; they improved again when Chou En-lai convinced her that China was not involved in the unsuccessful Ceylonese left-wing uprising of April 1971 and then granted a sizable hard-currency loan to Colombo.

By 1970, Peking was dropping discreet hints that the Chinese were interested in exploring ways to mend relations with New Delhi. There were overt gestures of friendship, including one by Mao himself on May Day 1970. Moreover, the Chinese maintained a hands-off attitude toward anti-government tribal and ethnic insurgencies in India's far northeast. The momentum of the Sino-Indian rapprochement was shown in November 1970 when the Chinese advised the Pakistanis not to be surprised if Peking normalized ties with New Delhi. Perhaps not coincidentally, Indo-Soviet relations cooled somewhat during the period.

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Crisis on the Subcontinent: A Fly in the Soup

The general trend toward better relations was ended when the crisis in East Pakistan erupted in March 1971. The events in East Pakistan have controlled the pace and substance of diplomacy and politics in South Asia ever since. The Bengali separatist drive in the East posed serious policy problems for Peking. In the past China had lent propaganda and other support to indigenous national liberation struggles as a means of advancing its interests in nonaligned and economically underdeveloped countries. Bengali independence, however, could stimulate separatists in Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province, leading to a complete breakup of Pakistan and perhaps even to fragmentation of the entire subcontinent. Such an unstable situation was sure to engage the interest of outside powers like the Soviet Union and US, and Peking could see little immediate gain in espousing the Bengali cause at Islamabad's expense.

The turn of events also clearly endangered Peking's budding detente with New Delhi. As the crisis deepened, the Indians came to attach great importance to Bengali independence and thus were more interested in arms and political backing from the big powers, rather than long-range diplomatic goals, such as normalization of Sino-Indian relations. Heavy-handed Chinese support for Pakistan, the Chinese recognized, could cement Moscow's position in New Delhi. A major factor in Peking's calculations was the concern that Moscow would take advantage of the situation to expand Soviet influence in South Asia. Chinese apprehensions on this score were raised by the accelerated pace of high-level Indo-Soviet consultations in the spring and early summer.

Peking's choice of policy was complicated, almost hamstrung, by a lack of assets in the region. China had insufficient standing with India to play the role of honest broker and attempt to reduce tensions through mediation. On the other hand, a forceful Chinese reaction would only underscore Peking's limited ability to influence events on the subcontinent and would clash with the reasonable image it was trying to project. Great distances and difficult terrain limited Peking's ability to bring its military power to bear, or even to supply the Pakistani Army for extended periods. Confronted with a rapidly deteriorating situation and cross-currents of policy goals and perhaps lacking a solid understanding of the subcontinent's political tides, Peking chose to counsel restraint, bringing what influence it could to bear on behalf of a peaceful settlement.

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The Undoing of a Policy

Almost from the start, Peking's moderate approach was compromised by an increasingly apprehensive and inept Pakistani Government, and an ambitious, opportunistic regime in New Delhi. The Chinese reacted with relative mildness to Indian statements sympathetic to the cause of an independent Bangladesh, while a ministerial-level Pakistani delegation to Peking in mid-April failed to elicit firm Chinese backing.

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China's less-than-wholehearted support for Pakistan was accompanied by continuing signs of Peking's interest in picking up the threads of detente with New Delhi. The Chinese were not deflected from this course even by the signing in early August of the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty, which clearly was directed against China as well as Pakistan. Remarkably, Peking made no public comment, and even in private Chinese officials tended to disparage the pact's importance.

Indeed, Peking may have interpreted the treaty as proof of the need for warmer relations with New Delhi in order to neutralize Soviet influence and persuade India to ease its pressure on Pakistan.

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Peking gave weight to these private efforts with a small but highly visible signal—an invitation to an Indian table tennis team to attend a tournament scheduled in Peking in November.

The two-track policy reassurance for Pakistan and detente with India collapsed as the crisis on the subcontinent came to a head. In early November, Islamabad dispatched to Peking another delegation, this one led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had long been identified as a friend of China. In the face of this obvious Pakistani bid for stronger backing, the Chinese went no further than to reaffirm their support for Pakistani unity and for the government in Islamabad and to call for a negotiated settlement among India, Pakistan and the Bengalis. The Chinese did agree to continue dispatching military supplies, but made no commitments to take military action should India attack Pakistan.

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Bhutto's visit and the rhetoric surrounding it did not stop the Sino-Indian flirtation. In early November, Chou sent a telegram to Mrs. Gandhi expressing the hope that Sino-Indian friendship would continue to grow. A public statement in mid-month by Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh suggested that New Delhi was considering raising its diplomatic mission in Peking to the ambassadorial level.

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Only when significant skirmishing between Indian and Pakistani army regulars broke out along the border in late November did Peking's rhetoric begin to harden. At the UN, Deputy Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua called the Indo-Soviet treaty a military alliance that had led to "bare-faced armed aggression against Pakistan," but his main jabs were against the Soviets rather than the Indians. Nevertheless, the fat was in the fire, and the outbreak of full-scale war during the first week of December scuttled Peking's hopes for improving relations with New Delhi.

This sequence of events may well have disillusioned Peking about the possibility of serious diplomacy with New Delhi. In fact, the Chinese may not have given sufficient weight to the steady divergence in Peking's and New Delhi's interests. Whatever New Delhi's long-range goals, they were subsumed in efforts to gain an immediate solution to the East Bengal problem. New Delhi was less interested in detente with Peking than in signs that Peking would not intervene militarily and that the Chinese were encouraging Islamabad to negotiate a political settlement with the rebellious Bengalis. Thus, although Peking may have thought the prospect of rapprochement was sufficient to stay New Delhi's hand, the Indians had other, more pressing business.

The War: A Bit Role for Peking

Chinese policy during the war in December was basically defensive; through diplomacy and propaganda, but little else, Peking sought to confine the war in time and space, to avoid any possibility of Chinese military involvement, and to save as much of Pakistan's West Wing as possible. The East Wing was written off as India gained the upper hand almost immediately. The Chinese attempted to lay primary responsibility for the outbreak of fighting on the subcontinent at Moscow's door.

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Peking prudently tailored its efforts to avoid foreclosing a Chinese role in post-war South Asia. Throughout the war, the Chinese avoided military moves that could be read as provocative. Once the East Wing had been overrun, the Chinese sent carefully modulated signals in the form of diplomatic protests against alleged Indian violations of the Tibetan frontier that were designed to deter any Indian plans to mount a full-scale invasion of West Pakistan. The Chinese refrained, however, from directly threatening the Indians and, by issuing the protests well after the events that occasioned them, were able to control their impact.

In support of Pakistan, the Chinese stepped up their propaganda directed against New Delhi, condemning Indian aggression and charging Delhi with pursuing an expansionist policy. Peking's heaviest brickbats, however, were reserved for the Soviet Union. The Chinese branded Moscow's support of India the "main reason" for the crisis and at the UN bitterly denounced the Soviet veto of a Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire and withdrawal to pre-war boundaries. By focusing on Moscow rather than Delhi—a practice that has persisted—Peking may have been signalling the Indians that, even though they were in the process of dismembering China's ally Pakistan, the Soviets and the intrusion of Soviet influence into South Asia were Peking's main concerns. China's low posture was in part due to concern about Soviet reaction to a more active Chinese role.

Picking Up the Pieces


With Pakistan's quick defeat in the East and inability to make compensating gains in the West, the Chinese were left with a salvage job. Years of backing Pakistan had secured a loyal, but now weak and dismembered ally. The budding detente with India had not blossomed, yet India was more clearly than ever the major power in the region. Worst of all, while Moscow had effectively upheld Indian interests, and had scored gains as a result, Peking was seen to lack the political and military means to support its ally. Moreover, the new government in Bangladesh owed much to New Delhi, something to Moscow, and nothing to Peking.

Even if a re-examination of Chinese policy in South Asia were to be undertaken, there clearly would be no change in Peking's basic goal of neutralizing Soviet influence on the subcontinent. Chinese leaders remained obsessed with the Soviet threat to Chinese security. Prospects that even an all-out Chinese commitment could build Pakistan into a counterweight to Indian and Soviet power in South Asia were slight. Indeed, there was a clear danger that the Chinese could be frozen out of the play of events in the region.

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The logic of the situation seemed to argue for another effort to mend fences with India, even if this meant further reducing the Chinese commitment to Islamabad. New Delhi, almost certainly sensing Peking's quandary, eased the way. 

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There were at the same time pressures pulling Peking in the opposite direction. Peking may have calculated that to enter into early negotiations with New Delhi over the terms of rapprochement would place the Chinese at a tactical disadvantage. India, flushed with success, unchallenged on the subcontinent and in alliance with Moscow, was in a strong position to drive a hard bargain with China and thus unlikely to be in a mood to compromise on essential points. Moreover, Peking could not easily disengage from its commitment to Pakistan. China could not walk away from an investment of this magnitude without damage to its international reputation, and perhaps to its self-respect. Some in Peking clearly had a strong feeling of obligation to Pakistan—for years, China's sole friend in the region. 

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 Moreover, in a purely strategic sense, for Peking to break with Islamabad in order to normalize relations with New Delhi would run the risk of leaving Pakistan open to Soviet exploitation with no guarantee that the Chinese could register compensating advances in India.

Still, Peking had a few low cards to play. Smaller countries, particularly Sri Lanka and Nepal, were wary of India's increased willingness to flex its muscles and were receptive to ties with China warmer and broader than before the war. Pursuing even this limited option made sense only if the Chinese attempted to shore up Pakistan and deferred overtures to India.

In effect, the Chinese committed themselves to the durability of the Bhutto regime, which had replaced the discredited Yahya Kahn government shortly after Pakistan's defeat. In practical terms, it meant Chinese military and economic assistance and, more important, diplomatic support of a kind that would help strengthen Islamabad's position vis-a-vis Delhi and Dacca. It meant that if Bhutto were not to be undercut domestically, Peking would have to link its diplomacy with Islamabad's, allowing Bhutto to set the pace on such key issues as recognition of Bangladesh and a general peace settlement in the subcontinent.

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The Emergence of the Post-War Policy

It is by no means certain that the Chinese leaders saw things so clearly in the immediate aftermath of the war. The outlines of Peking's policy did not begin to emerge until early February 1972 during a Bhutto visit to China; indeed, Bhutto's trip may have forced Peking's hand regarding the course it planned in South Asia. The impetus for the visit came solely from the Pakistani side; the Chinese appeared reluctant.

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In any event, what emerged from Bhutto's visit was a continuation of the basic approach the Chinese had adopted at the time of the Bengali crisis in March 1971—no reduction in Chinese support, but no marked increase in their commitment.

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The joint communique issued at the end of the Bhutto visit contained a Pakistani plea for nations to refrain from rushing to recognize Bangladesh. The Chinese merely acknowledged "understanding" of Islamabad's position.

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In late February the Chinese left no doubt that they were keeping their colors nailed firmly to Pakistan's mast. The Chinese inserted a gratuitous clause in the Sino-US Shanghai communique calling for self-determination in Jammu and Kashmir, long a flashpoint of contention in South Asia politics, and a move as sure to please Islamabad as it was to anger New Delhi.

Peking Cultivates India's Lesser Neighbors

In reaffirmation of the Pakistani tie, Peking played its other low cards in South Asia. Chinese cultivation of the smaller South Asian states, interrupted during the Indo-Pakistani war, was resumed in early 1972. The new

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power balance in South Asia deepened concern among the smaller states regarding Indian expansionism, and Peking played on such fears. Although the basic impulse of Chinese policy was anti-Soviet and although the Chinese fashioned their diplomacy with an eye toward New Delhi, Peking's courtship of less-developed countries suggests that warm relations with Sri Lanka, Nepal and, to a lesser extent, Bhutan and Afghanistan, would probably have been pursued with some gusto even without the stimulus provided by Moscow and New Delhi.

After Pakistan, Sri Lanka has come to be the main object of Peking's political attention and economic largesse in the region. Against the backdrop of India's role in the creation of Bangladesh, Prime Minister Bandaranaike's government, already shaken by the uprising in April 1971, had grown increasingly concerned over the possibility of renewed strife on the eve of the first anniversary of the uprising in April 1972. Sri Lanka turned to Peking and accepted Chou En-lai's offer of small arms and artillery, made a year before but put off by Colombo. The Chinese rushed deliveries to Sri Lanka; some supplies were flown in directly at Ceylonese request and expense.

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Peking cemented its position in Colombo when Mrs. Bandaranaike visited China in mid-summer 1972. The Chinese gave her a mammoth reception and red-carpet treatment throughout her stay. She talked with Mao, and received a \$44-million loan for economic development. Chou En-lai publicly endorsed Mrs. Bandaranaike's appeal for international recognition of the Indian Ocean as a "Zone of Peace"—a project with which the Chinese had flirted for several years. By way of contrast, the Chinese publicly gave the cold shoulder to a leader of the Peking-oriented wing of the Ceylonese Communist Party, who visited China during the summer.

Peking's commitment to the well-being of Mrs. Bandaranaike's government has not been open-ended. The Chinese seem concerned that Sri Lanka, which spends well beyond its means on social welfare and consumer programs, could become a serious drain on Chinese resources. Although China has contributed close to \$80 million in aid since the uprising in 1971 and in December renewed a rice-rubber exchange arrangement highly favorable to Colombo, the Chinese have made clear that Sri Lanka should put its economic house in order and rely mainly on its own efforts to develop its economy. Moreover, Peking has not responded with dispatch to recent Ceylonese pleas for accelerated rice shipments.

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Peking has traded on Nepal's fears of expansionist tendencies in New Delhi to forge closer ties with Kathmandu. As in the case of Sri Lanka, mutual distrust of India seems to form the basis for the current warm Sino-Nepalese relationship; the Chinese are little concerned about Soviet penetration in Nepal. Peking offered Kathmandu economic help during its difficult negotiations with New Delhi in 1970-71 over a new transit and trade treaty, but the Chinese have taken care not to give India cause for alarm and have not fundamentally altered Nepal's status as a Himalayan buffer state.

The highlight last year in Sino-Nepalese relations was a visit of Prime Minister Bista to China in late November. The Chinese entertained Bista royally: Mao received him and Chou En-lai held two rounds of talks with the Nepalese delegation. More important, the Chinese gave Bista the economic assistance he asked for at Chou's insistence and with Mao's blessing.

Bhutan, secluded in the heart of the Himalayas and long a virtual protectorate of India though an independent state and UN member, is of only marginal interest to Peking.

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Last year two Bhutanese officials, one a diplomat, accompanied a sports team to Peking. There they took the first steps toward establishing more normal relations. The foreign minister expressed hope for closer ties and a border agreement within three to five years. In this area, however, the Chinese probably aim at little more than an occasional tweak of Delhi's nose. Most of the Sino-Bhutanese border is not in dispute, and Peking has published maps that concede at least one major disputed area to Bhutan.

China's policy interest in Afghanistan, aside from gaining a toehold on the Soviet border, revolves around Kabul's relationship to Pakistan. Peking turned its attention toward the Afghans in early 1972 because it feared that they might attempt to profit from Islamabad's defeat. If Kabul were to support independence or autonomy for Baluchistan or Pushtunistan, the danger of a complete breakup of Pakistan would be enhanced.

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Pressures from the Afghans on Pakistan, real or imagined, apparently have eased, and the Chinese have recently negotiated a civil air agreement with Kabul. As long as Peking remains committed to the Bhutto regime, however, and as long as Bhutto's power in Islamabad seems even remotely threatened by communal unrest, the Chinese are likely to use what influence they have in Kabul—still far less than that of Moscow—to persuade the Afghans to keep hands off.

Recognition of Bangladesh: A Policy Immobilized

All these moves have been peripheral to the problem of the newest state on the subcontinent. Peking's post-war South Asian policy has foundered on the issue of recognition of Bangladesh, which itself has been tightly linked to the larger and more complex questions of a settlement to the war and the terms for subsequent accommodation on the subcontinent.

Although China's commitment to Pakistan appeared solid in the spring of 1972, there were indications that Peking was seeking room for maneuver, if only to preclude leaving India and the Soviets with an open field in Bangladesh. After hedging on recognition in the communique following Bhutto's visit in February, Chinese propaganda generally avoided direct attacks on Prime Minister Mujib and his regime. In April, Chou even voiced Chinese disapproval of the way Yahya had handled the Bengali crisis, telling a delegation of American scholars that Peking did not defend the policies of Yahya's government "for it had done bad things."

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The immobility of Chinese policy was confirmed during the debate over Bangladesh's membership in the UN. The Chinese apparently shared Bhutto's judgment that his precarious position in Islamabad precluded him from agreeing to Mujib's demand for recognition prior to a meeting between the

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two leaders. This in turn led them to espouse a veto, if necessary, to block Dacca's proposed entry into the UN. Although running the risk of further delaying implementation of the Simla agreements negotiated between Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi in July, Peking apparently believed the veto could prevent serious deterioration in Bhutto's domestic position and would give the Pakistanis time to strike a bargain with Dacca and New Delhi under more favorable circumstances. In the UN debate, Peking contended that Bangladesh should be denied entry because Dacca and Delhi had failed to comply with the December 1971 resolutions, especially clauses calling for withdrawal of foreign troops from Bangladesh and repatriation of prisoners.

Peking obviously would have preferred to have kept Dacca out without exercising its veto and damaging its larger interests in the third world. A veto denying entry into the UN on the grounds that the applicant had not fulfilled the terms of a UN resolution was undoubtedly painful, as this was precisely the rationale that had been used to exclude Peking from the UN for 21 years. When Chinese diplomats in early August passed word that Peking intended to exercise its veto, they were almost certainly attempting to forestall moves to bring the Bangladesh question before the Security Council. In the end, the Chinese were outmaneuvered by pro-Bangladesh forces in the UN, led by the Soviets, and several substitute Chinese measures that would have postponed consideration were voted down. China ended by using its veto.

What Lies Ahead?

Despite these setbacks, the turn of events in South Asia has done little to change the basic rationale and impulse of Chinese policy. Discussions between the Alec Douglas-Home mission and ranking Chinese officials, including Chou, convinced the British that Peking was still almost totally preoccupied with the Soviet threat and that China's view of India was colored, if not conditioned, by this concern. With a powerful Soviet military force along its northern frontiers uppermost in mind, the Chinese were anxious to "deactivate" their southern borders with South and Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the Chinese said they would be normalizing relations with India only after New Delhi had improved its ties with Pakistan. They would not recognize Dacca until Bhutto assured them his position in Islamabad was stable, and he had taken the lead. In the meantime, they would oppose Dacca's bid for UN membership until Pakistani prisoners had been repatriated and foreign troops pulled out of Bangladesh.

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[REDACTED] the Chinese are talking as though they intend to stick by Bhutto and await a settlement before normalizing relations with India. Given its limited choices, Peking may find this course attractive for

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several reasons. India's ties with Moscow apparently have cooled over the past several months, and New Delhi seems to have mellowed toward Peking, though the Chinese have done nothing. At the same time, Bhutto has somewhat strengthened his hold in Islamabad, and Bangladesh's future is uncertain. Peking may read these signs as vindication of its basically passive course. If this is the case, it helps explain why the Chinese have taken a hard line in private conversations and why there has been no visible response from Peking to several recent Indian gestures.

There is some evidence, however, that with an eye toward eventual detente with India, Peking has subtly shifted the emphasis of its diplomacy and is quietly pressing Bhutto for a settlement. Directly following Peking's veto in the UN and at a time when implementation of the Simla agreements was at an impasse, Chiao Kuan-hua flew to Islamabad without advance public notice for talks with Bhutto and other officials. Although neither the Pakistanis nor Chinese provided specifics about Chiao's visit, he does rank near the top of China's foreign policy hierarchy and ordinarily undertakes only missions of unusual sensitivity and substance. The timing and circumstances of Chiao's visit and subsequent events on the subcontinent suggest that Chiao had a mandate to nudge Bhutto toward a settlement.

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In any event, some movement in Indo-Pakistani relations was evident following Chiao's trip. Progress was made in Indo-Pakistani negotiations over mutual troop withdrawals, and in late November, Bhutto announced that he would release all Indian soldiers held prisoner since the 1971 war; in early December, both Islamabad and New Delhi gave ground and fashioned a compromise on the disputed territory, which, in effect, isolated the Kashmir dispute from implementation of the Simla agreements.

These steps, which moved the situation on the subcontinent a trifle closer to settlement, required significant shifts in position, particularly on Bhutto's part. To suggest that Chinese prodding played a role is not to deny

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that other forces were at work. It seems more than coincidence, however, that progress in directions apparently desired by Peking should take place in a relatively short period after Chiao's talks in Islamabad.

There has also been visible movement on the Indian leg of the triangle. Foreign Minister Swaran Singh, in a speech before Parliament on 30 November, strongly indicated New Delhi's interest in improving relations with Washington. A week later, Singh indicated publicly that India was favorably disposed toward establishing more normal relations with China. Peking almost certainly read Singh's remarks as signals that India was looking for ways to loosen its ties with Moscow and for a realignment of big power interests on the subcontinent. Despite these unmistakable overtures from Delhi, there is no evidence that China has responded, either privately or publicly. China has placed itself in a position that requires Pakistani movement before China can itself move. In Peking, the ball is in Islamabad's court, and Bhutto has indicated he will take no initiative before elections in Bangladesh in early March.

Nevertheless, it seems a safe proposition that both Peking and New Delhi see merit in detente and, by whatever means and at whatever speed, some sort of closer relationship is almost certain to evolve. The disputed Sino-Indian border does not appear an insolvable problem. New Delhi indicated a willingness to give ground on this question over a year ago. A compromise is likely to center on Chinese concessions in the eastern portion of the disputed frontier and Indian concessions in the west. The inclination of both countries over the years not to exacerbate each other's insurgency and ethnic problems suggests that questions, such as Chinese support for Naga and Mizo rebels and the role of the Dalai Lama in India, are easily surmountable. The level of the new relationship will probably be conditioned, at least initially, by China's obvious reluctance to abandon the Pakistanis after having come all these miles with them.

Elsewhere in South Asia, Peking probably is satisfied with its efforts to cultivate smaller "Third World" countries. These relatively weak nations cannot play much of a role in the larger currents of South Asian politics, and they offer Peking little advantage vis-a-vis Moscow and New Delhi. Moreover, the Chinese have gone about as far as they can in building their influence in these countries.

Peking seems wary of deeper involvement in Sri Lanka and is almost certainly not about to stretch China's own resources to bail Colombo out of its chronic economic woes nor to crawl further out on the limb for the

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Bandaranaike government should its political position be seriously threatened—unless the threat should appear to Peking to have originated in Moscow. With respect to Nepal and Bhutan, Peking is mindful of India's interest in these buffer states and will probably take care not to overplay its hand and unduly aggravate New Delhi. In Afghanistan, Peking seems satisfied merely to maintain a foot in the door.

Some degree of Sino-Indian rapprochement could well trigger an adjustment of big power interests in South Asia. Obviously, Peking is in no position to replace the economic, technological and military aid provided India by the Soviets. The Chinese will therefore almost certainly promote Indian self-sufficiency and, in the interim, encourage New Delhi to shop in Western Europe, Japan, and the US for assistance. At the same time, Peking probably expects that its ties with the Pakistanis will loosen. Peking probably also anticipates a continuing and perhaps larger American role in South Asia. For some time the Chinese have been aware of a growing Sino-American mutuality of interests in the region, and, indeed, they found it comfortable, if not rewarding, during the late stages of the Indo-Pakistani war. For Peking, however, the overriding consideration is that a realignment on the subcontinent means decreased Soviet influence on China's southern flank and an expanded Chinese role.

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